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## Kitsap Park Review

**February 20, 2007**

Even though spring hiking, camping, paddling and riding season is just around the corner, it might be a bit longer before your favorite Olympic National Park or Forest trail or campground opens.



Jack Galloway | National Park Services Photo

Taft Creek, on the Hoh River Road, wiped out a big piece of pavement.

Floods and hurricane-force winds ripped and smashed a number of roads, causing at least \$3 million in estimated damage in the park. Mother Nature also mangled Olympic National Forest roads and trails, although no dollar estimates of damage are available.

Despite the closures — or rather, in spite of them — there are plenty of opportunities to get outdoors. The damage caused on some roads and trails yield new hikes, rides and paddles outdoorsfolk might otherwise drive past.

From the Skokomish River north and west to the ocean, here's a look at both the closures and some of the opportunities they might provide:

### STAIRCASE

Forest Road 24 on the north shore of Lake Cushman remains closed by the Bear Gulch II fire last fall, although owners of summer cabins at Bear Gulch can now access their property by permit.

Hikers looking for a good walk can take Forest Road 24 east to the Mount Ellinor Road, Forest Road 2419 and park at snowline for a walk along the road, while paddlers can find solitude and quiet on Lake Cushman this time of year.

### DOSEWALLIPS ROAD

The Dosewallips Road remains closed about 10 miles west of Highway 101 at Brinnon - but the road beyond makes a great hike for 5.5 miles to the old Dosewallips Campground in Olympic National Park. Families looking for a shorter outing can hike to Olympic National Forest's Elkhorn Campground, about a mile upstream from the washout.

The road above the washout also makes a great mountain bike ride. The washout bypass, a single-track trail, is probably too steep for all but the strongest riders, but it is less than a quarter-mile long.

## HEART O' THE HILLS

A December windstorm aimed a mighty blow at the Heart O' the Hills Campground, snapping off huge ancient cedars and fir. Campground Loop A - usually open for Hurricane Ridge skiers and snowshoers during the winter - is closed and likely won't reopen for months.

Marcia Hall, a Keyport resident, hiked through the campground after Christmas and reported that at least three of the campground loops were completely wiped out by downed trees. "The first loop on the right has lost more than 50 percent of the old-growth trees," she wrote. "One entire hillside has EVERY tree down."

Barb Maynes, Olympic National Park public information officer, says none of the campground loops are likely to be cleared by their typical spring opening dates. She suggests campers head to Elwha Campground, which is open during the winter, although the restrooms with running water are closed until spring.

Hikers are likely to find plenty of downed timber and snow in the higher elevations of the Lake Angeles and Heather Park trails, but both paths can be followed. Trailheads for both are located in a big parking area just past staff housing at Heart O' the Hills entrance station.

## ELWHA RIVER

Vic Ulsh, a Bremerton hiker, wrote last week that he tried to hike the Elwha River Trail from Whiskey Bend, but found the road closed at its junction with the Elwha River Road. Information officer Maynes says the road is likely to be closed for at least a month, until overworked crews can check it out.

In the meantime, hikers and bicyclists can park at a picnic area near the Elwha Ranger Station and hike the Whiskey Bend Road, which after climbing less than a mile, descends to a primitive boat launch above the Glines Canyon Dam. From there, you can hike or ride another 5 miles along the road to the Whiskey Bend Trailhead.

Another alternative for hikers is to climb the steep, little-used trail that starts several hundred feet up the Whiskey Bend Road from the ranger station. This trail heads up Griff Creek, then climbs through forest for 6 miles to Hurricane Hill - although the final 3 or 4 miles are likely to be in deep snow.

The Elwha River Road crosses the river, passes Altair Campground and climbs to the Glines Canyon Dam, where it has been closed, leaving a walk of about 6 miles, one-way, to Olympic Hot Springs. Maynes said the most recent trail report indicated there was 2 feet of snow at the hot springs and more than 60 downed trees on the old road from the trailhead.

## LAKE CRESCENT

Hikers and bicyclists can now reach both ends of the 4-mile (one-way) Spruce Railroad Trail, according to Maynes. The west end of the trail is reached via the Camp David Jr. Road, which also provides access to the Pyramid Mountain Trail.

Maynes said that a number of big trees destroyed the new trail and viewpoint at Marymere Falls, a short hike from the Storm King Visitor Center on the lake. Trail crews are working on a new path to the falls.

Fairholme Campground, at the west end of the lake, is expected to open April 6.

## SOL DUC

The Sol Duc Road is closed at the park entrance station, which was damaged by a fallen tree during the December windstorm. A number of trees fell across the road near the park boundary, Maynes said, and park crews hope to get it open for a March 1 opening of the Sol Duc Hot Springs.

In the meantime, hikers and bicyclists willing to work their way around dangerous deadfalls and icy or snowy spots might find quiet walks or rides on the road. Another alternative - if it's not gated - might be to take the South Fork Road, Forest Road 2918 for about 4 miles to the bridge that crosses the Sol Duc River to the park road.

## HOH RIVER

Probably the greatest damage Old Man Winter wreaked was along the Hoh River Road, where huge sections of the road were ripped out by floods and massive, centuries-old trees were toppled. Maynes said crews have opened a narrow passage to allow park workers to reach damage at the Hoh Visitor Center and Campground, but it will be months before public access can be restored.

Washington Conservation Corps crews are helping remove the debris from the road and laying conduit for utilities destroyed by the flood. Maynes said park officials hope to reopen the road to the visitor center and trailhead by May.

## QUEETS

The Queets River corridor to the campground and trailhead remains closed as park officials hope to restore access via temporary roads bypassing the Matheny Creek Bridge. Maynes said it is hoped the roads can be opened by summer.

## QUINAULT

Last, damage on both roads leading from Lake Quinault into the park is currently being repaired. Both the North and South Shore roads around Lake Quinault are passable and the North Fork Quinault Road and primitive Campground are now open.

Maynes said the Graves Creek Road, which leads 6 miles up the South Fork of the Quinault, is still closed by a massive section of trees blown down by the December storm. Crews which just opened the North Fork have now shifted their attention to the Graves Creek Road.

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